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# AMERICAN ART JOURNAL.

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HENRY C. WATSON Editor.

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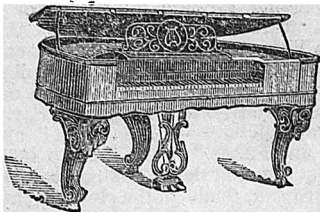
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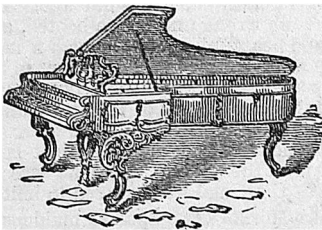
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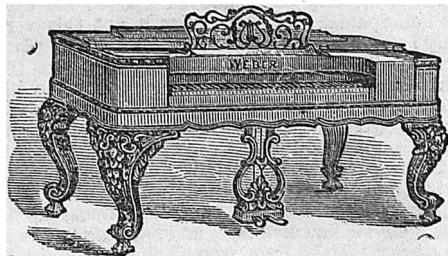
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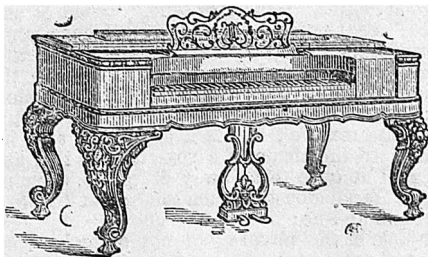
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## Murillo and his Picture Children

We are going to the Merced, once a convent, now the picture museum of Seville. We, that is, I, *egomet*, and Herr Schwartzlicht, who is, I believe, an agent of some National Gallery or other; a German gentleman, as I soon find out, very blind to the nature and beauty of art, but with a lynx-eye for the oils and varnishes such and such a painter used, or abused. He will tell you, on the smallest provocation, everything you do not want to know: on how many inch thick oak panel Da Vinci painted; and how many yards long Gainsborough's brushes were. If you are pleased with the Titan-strength of a Zurbarán, he tells you that there is a dreadful want of balance in the second finger of the left hand: if you stop to admire Murillo's harmonious depth, he desires you to observe that the painter could never get real tone, and that his motives are never ideal. I turn with unpedantic desire to enjoy the reds and browns of the Andalusian school, its skillful drapery, swan-breasted clouds, stern ascetic sierras, lavish flowers, and, above all, its serious religious feeling. Seeing my German friend, at the very first sniff of the picture gallery, put on a grand, patronizing and encouraging air, stroke his Judas beard, visibly swell and become larger and higher, with the intense desire of imparting information to a zealous but ignorant picture-seeker, I contrive to shoot off down a siding, leaving him for a time entangled with the curator, thirsty for shillings, and pursue my own way, fancy free. I obstinately examine everything he despises, and keep my back care-

fully turned to him; for, of all bores, a learned bore, and "an authority," is the most intolerable; and I trace my devious way up and down the lofty, bare, dreary room, once, I suppose, the chapel of the convent, the east end being elevated and approached by steps, serving now, not unfitly in the eyes of art-votaries, as the altarpiece. Hence, through a lonely churchyard cloister, hard, rude, bare, trellised, and tapestried with trailing flowers—we mount to the refectory and the long tiled corridors, that once led to the dormitories where monks dreamed of the world they had left. I seem to be wandering over the house of a painter newly dead, examining his masterpieces. Even the sly touters, who pull out of their sleeves daubs of copies and sham originals, do not thoroughly awake me.

Spanish art was born in a convent cell, bare and stony; and cradled, either in the squalid marketplace (where the brown gipsy children sleep under the green melon mountains), or at the black stump of the charcoaled stake. It was not a prancing, can-clinking creature like Dutch art; nor a naked giant, chained with flowers, like Flemish after Rubens; nor a saintly Madonna contemplating votary, like Italian art; nor an operá fah-painting posture-maker, like French. No, it was a wrung, withered bigot, wrapped in brown sackcloth, girt with a Jew-strangling cord hid in a cavern of a cowl, next on its horny camel's knees before a bleeding image crowned with thorns, and above the thorns starry glory. Beat its skeleton breast bloody; tore its priestly ring of grey hair; kissed skulls, and lashed itself with thorny thongs. It was essentially a slave of the church and of the court in Spain; the twin upholders of bodily and spiritual slavery. If it sneered at a ruffled court lady, it was whipped into the Inquisition; if it smashed up with a mallet the Virgin's image, whose price the mean noble haggled at with the proud sculptor or painter, there was the same certain terminus of independence, or rebellion: the Inquisition. If the man with the pallet shield, blazoned and ringed with color, refused to paint an insolent grandee: the Inquisition. If he painted too crude, or not flattering enough, or too strong: always the Inquisition. No wonder that Spanish art grew up a monkish, dusty-faced fakir, with no sunshine on his face, and the red reflection of the Inferno ever shining in his cruel, yet frightened eyes. No wonder, as the snakes round Leonardo's Medusa, its background darkness teemed with threatening awful shadows, breathed up from Tophet.

No wonder that I longed to get away from the ghastly Saint Jerome of Torrigiano, at the Seville Museum, who has been for two centuries beating his bony breast to a pulp with a round paving-stone; or Saint Dominic, opposite, who having torn his back to a red-current jelly, is left like an angry schoolmaster with only the stump of the scourge in his hand. Fortunately for me, as I stand in the long hall of the Museo, once a convent, gaping at these austerities of fire-lighting faith, it suddenly strikes me that Saint Jerome looks exactly, as some traveler used to say, like a man preparing for his cast at skittles; and Saint Dominic like a rival player, shaking his fist from over the bowling alley, and challenging him to come on like a man. Having discovered this bit of rough humor about the two saints, I instantly break into a merry laugh, harmless enough, but highly offensive to the irritable and sore pride of the curator, whom I have to pay two pesetas to for worrying at my elbow, and dogging me with ridiculous comments on the pictures. And at whose attention and condescension in taking my money I am brutal enough not to be grateful, having once ascertained that the Murillo pictures are all marked with a pink ticket and number in the corner, and the gran, gummy Zurburan with a green one. At the receipt of this and other information, I am always expected to solemnly bow to the mechanical insolent wretch thirsting for my shillings. I soon see that if the curator has one prejudice in the world, it is for these Murillos he gets his shillings by

showing. He has a peculiar way of snubbingly pointing at them with his chin, and patronisingly alluding to their merits, that, as a personal friend and lover of Murillo, exasperates me. But what, is there to do? I could not flatten his hump of self-esteem even by a three weeks' beating.

But, before I begin my ramble through the old deserted convent—the choicest nest of Murillos in the world (at least, his religious pictures, for his children have wandered away from the earth hovels of Seville)—I must recall the chief Spanish painters as they struck my dull eyes collectively in the various Spanish galleries. Let me begin with Velasquez—Don Rodriguez de Silva y Velasquez—born in this very city, that, if I were a Moorish king, I would at once go and bombard with oranges till it surrendered; black-eyed beauties, church-plate and all. Let me take this handsome son of the Portuguese exile lawyer, the pupil of the fiery, dashing Herrera, who was born in the very year Vandyck opened his eyes in half-Spanish Antwerp. Was it not this very day I saw his portrait, in his tight doublet, plain white collar, buckled belt and dagger, with the celebrated cross (hanging by a gold cord to his neck) that the Spanish king admiringly added to the portrait of himself, the bushy-haired, gipsy, swarthy man had newly painted. There he is with his short, stubby brushes, his stately maulstick, and bag-shaped pallet. There he is with his waving moustachios sweeping almost up to his eyes, his fine oval face, and swelling bumped-out brow. Have I not seen all the rustic drinkers, and rouged Infantas, and sturdy Dons, and boy horsemen, and young queen-wives, he ever painted, and know their dark charm and the Spanish magic of their strong grace?

And then there is Zurburan, whose majestic Saint Peter—a divine anger on his swollen, prophetic brow—quite knocked me backwards, when I suddenly came on it yesterday in a side chapel in the murky cathedral of Seville; and Cano, and Roelos, and Pacheco. Can I recapitulate them all?

Herr Schwartzentlicht, the traveling agent of some National Gallery or other, who has been for some minutes grubbing at the right-hand corner of the Saint Thomas of Villanueva, suddenly rises, and pronounces, in an oracular voice, that the third toe on the left foot of the brown beggar with a bandage round his head is decidedly "out of keeping." Now, the peculiarity of Herr Schwartzentlicht is a love which he shares with several others of his unbiased craft—that of flourishing perpetually, like the glittering swords of a juggler, phrases such as "lofty in feeling," "good motive," "subdued tone," "want of balance;" conventional phrases which I have generally found, though much used by dealers and other destroyers and manufacturers, to take the place of sense. Now he springs at the hapless picture, rubs his nose against it to test, I suppose, the texture, makes a leap back, rolls his hand into the shape of a spy-glass, smiles, and then all at once turns away disgusted, exclaiming, "Harmoniously broken tones: but the execution note—no; note plastic enote!"

I look at the picture, but not quite knowing what the German critic means by plastic, or what broken tones are in a picture that seems an emanation—not a building up or slow thought and hand labor, I turn from the Herr—who is absorbed now in what he calls the "broad and solid execution" of a grim black-visaged saint by Blavijo—to the wonderful napkin-picture, a little square Virgic and Child, called by the Sevillians "La Servilleta," because it was painted by Murillo for a cook or servitor of the Capucin convent, who had been attentive to him at the refectory-table, and who begged a keepsake of him at parting.

"It is in his second manner!" roars Schwartzentlicht, jealous of my praise of the divine mother and the happy cowering child struggling on her lap, as if longing to be petted by the painter, just as the model-child probably did as the dark, keen-eyed man eyed its little kicking

limbs, and struck them in on the napkin. "Too realistic," says Schwartzentlicht, making a face at the picture; "of too predominant a hot tone—quite fiery in the browns."

It certainly is a little hot, and Murillo has used, perhaps from haste or the mannerism of the moment, too much of that brown which the Andalusian painters, then and now, manufacture by burning the bones saved from the olla, just as the Valencian school imitate the purple of their mulberry-gardens. But, then, who but a pedant could avoid being charmed with the sweet temper and divine suavity of the expression, the homeliness and yet the religion of the whole scene?

"The flesh tones too red!" shouts Schwartzentlicht, storming about before the picture. "Mein Gott! you should see Cornalioose—that, sapperment! vos a bainter!"

Leaving him busy taking notes of "A Dead Christ," with corpse face and grinning yellow teeth, showing through the mirk midnight of a more than Caravaggio horror, I roam on to the nosegay of pictures of this compound of Greuze and Raphael, this last religious painter of Europe, passing through all grades of Murillo's three manners—the Frio (cold), the Calido (hot), and the Vaporoso, or vaporous. Presently I and Chiaroscuro, as I call the German, will go on to the Caridad, or hospital alms-house, out on the walls near the river to see the great Seville painter's great pictures—"The Thirst" and "The Loaves and Fishes," all but the two little panels of Saint John and the infant Saviour, left by the French robber, Soult, of the eleven great pictures painted for the Chapel, by Murillo.

I am entranced as I look on the "Saint Felix de Cantalicio," a vaporoso picture—Schwartzentlicht, breaking out every now and then with phrases such as "full and marrowy execution," "harmonious tone," "speaking action;" alternating with a storm of critical abuse, as "bad in motive," "no silvery tones," "no juiciness;" so that you really do not know at first whether he is talking of a pudding, a piece of plate, the coachman who drove us from the hotel, or a curant-pie.

This Saint Felix, the Spaniards say, was painted with milk and blood, "con leche y sangre;" if you prick it, it would bleed; the child has fed on roses. The old saint, if I remember right, is on his knees to the little unconscious child, who is innocent and playful as any little bantling can be. And while the little creature, about whom there is an air of divinity and command, expressed, we know not how, is painted with such evident tenderness and love, the aged saint, whose flesh is sunk and ribbed and grey, is a model of intellectual, worn old age. The features, though wrung and storm-beaten, are most refined and beautiful—good for such a man have been the warm summer twilight spent in the cell, and the pacings in violet-scented convent gardens. We take this as the type of the good and intellectual monk. This vaporous, melting manner of Murillo he took up late in life: just before his fatal fall from the scaffold, when he was hurried by want of time, and was induced to imitate.

I admire Murillo's two Spanish maidens, Saints Justina and Rufina, the guardian saints of the Giralda, standing at either side. They are merely those clear, brown-faced, black-haired girls you still see in the Seville streets, or nursing children at hotel-windows with red roses stuck coquetishly over their left ears. The pippins, green and buff, lying at their feet, show they were potters' daughters. They are perfectly painted, with clean, gritty, creamy texture, and sharp-cut shadows.

Except as a picture of two pretty peasant-girls, this work had no interest for me; but my German backer-up told me (he never cares about subjects) that it was a grand Calido, forcible yet tender, and Mein Gott, vary, vary (he shook his forefinger before his nose to express the subtle meaning of his)—blank. There certainly never was a painter who, without much imagination and telling no story, could yet vision his eyes with such

pure love, and make lips so parting with words of prayer as Murillo.

On I went through the Murillo room, leaving my critical friend to revel in seas of Polancos, Valdez Reals, Varelas, Vasquez, and other unknown nonentities, including the rather hopeless Juan de Castillo, Murillo's master, who, compared to Guirlandajo, the goldsmith painter, who taught Michael Angelo or Perugino, who taught Raphael, is, as I heard a jocose English traveler colloquially observe—"A poor ha'porth of cheese."

Leaving all sorts of gloomy pictures unnoticed behind me, I soon learned to see the thoughtful yet happy innocence of Murillo's virgins, though I thought the golden, perpetual sunlight of the "napkin" picture, rather too much of a hot chestnut tone of brown; but I suppose, to the end of time, lovers will call red hair auburn and golden, and one cannot be severe on a critic who suffers from a short delirium of good-nature.

For my part I prefer the little picture, (though it is an allegory) which I saw yesterday over the altar of the small chapel, of the Guardian Angel, in the dim Cathedral of Seville. The angel, in a yellow girt-up robe and purple mantle, points to Heaven with one hand; and, with the other, leads on a little lively, tripping, yet sturdy child—emblem of the human soul. I was walking round the little episcopal dens of chapels, reading the frontispiece pictures that are panelled above their entrances, when I saw this divine picture.

Now the picture, where a covey of thirty-three cherubims, who continually keep flying probably because they are unable to sit, and who shower down on Saint Francis the red and white roses picked from the briars with which he has been scourging himself, I have never seen; nor have I the picture of the child telling Saint Augustine that he will no more explain the mystery of the Trinity than he could put the sea into a finger-hole in the sand-pit; but I never hope to see a finer picture than the Charity of the Thomas of Villanueva—the pearl of the gallery—the most ambitious and inventive in composition, the most refined and varied in expression, which Murillo used to call fondly, "Sulienzo (his own picture)." It is merely the Saint in sharp white mitre and black robes stooping at the door of his cathedral distributing alms to a crowd of Spanish beggars.

It took Bartholomew Stephen Murillo a long life, with his black cataract of hair streaming down from his broad full forehead over his shoulders, before he could paint these lean-limbed bandaged Sevillian beggars so well. He could not have quite done this painted argument for Charity when for covering his school-books with saints and virgins, he was sent to his kinsman, Juan del Castello, to look at art afar off, while rinsing brushes and grinding colours. He appears here grown somewhat, since by the red braiser in winter, or under the court-yard awning in summer, he copied Torrigiano's *Mano de la Teta*, or stripped his brown arms that his fellow-students might copy them in conjunction with pots and pans, melons and peaches, quails and herons. He has grown since, with a burning brow, when his master's school removed to Cadiz, he had to stroll about in the Thursday markets, amid stale fish, fruit, old iron, and pottery with muleteers, gipsies, and mediant friars to sell his cheap daubs of Saint Onoprius, Saint Christophers, our Lady of Carmels, to captains of ships and South American exporters. Think of the poor painter, now an orphan, starting to Madrid on foot to petition the court painter Velasquez to help him on the road to Rome, whither he is never destined to go. Now we see why he, who sometimes painted an archangel playing the liddle to Saint Francis, San Diego, blessing a basin of soup, and the soul of that villain Philip the Second ascending to heaven in a globe of fire, loved these naked cripples that he has here strewn round the gentle prelate with the starched mitre, and we see where he sat to notice that happy knavish beggar-boy, not much warped from his first innocence, who runs to his care-worn mother to show her the marvelled which the good almoner has put into his hand.

And that this is one of the old market-place recollections we know, because the original sketch of the same good Archbishop of Valencia dividing his clothes among some poor children, was actually picked up at the Seville Feria by an English collector. Murillo was not an imaginative man, and his real subjects are simply street children, virgins, and saints. Of art-learning he had little; but he had what no academy can give—heart. He painted from that, and not from his head. Of head painters we know many; but only one heart painter.

How deliciously the rosy flesh of the children contrasts with the soft ascetic darkness of the prelate's robes and the rich transparent browns, deep without being clotty or glutinous of the background. What a bright serene nature shines through this picture that preaches so loudly of charity! Murillo, himself a father, loved to paint the Child Saviour in conjunction with thin-faced saints, who have shut themselves out from so large a branch of sympathy with the world as paternity implies; for, in this same room he has twice painted Saint Anthony and the Infant Jesus; in one picture standing; in another, sitting on the open folio which the unhappy hermit, who needed the purging of so much temptation, has lately been annotating. Murillo has achieved the difficult task of making the Infant Saviour beam with a divine intelligence and yet a perfect child.—Whether painting the angels, cooking the Franciscan's dinner, the good Queen of Hungary healing the celebrated scald-head, or the jar of white lilies in the Saint Anthony picture that church-going sparrows have been known to peck at, Murillo never painted children more beautiful than these. The only excuse for Mr. Raskin's sneer at the low vice and dusty feet of Murillo's beggar boys, is, that he has never been to Spain and seen any Murillos that are worth seeing.

I must not recapitulate all the charms of the picture of San Augustin, Saint Joseph, or the Dead Christ, or I shall be thought a greater bore than Schwartzlicht, who is bound by rule not to agree in admiring any painter till he is dead, and safely beyond the reach of envy.—Out of the hearing of damning biographies and contradictory eulogies. Else should I like to learnedly inflict on you the beauties of that best Conception (for Murillo is called *par excellence*, "the painter of conceptions"); the glory of that blue robe; the singularity of the crescent-moon the Virgin stands on; the rapture of that burst of saffron sunrise that brings out the pure, pitiful woman, with her arms meekly crossed upon her bosom, and her serene, adoring eyes turned exultingly heavenward. It is the vision of a child-betrothed, dead on the eve of marriage.

And now, having seen the pictures in the old convent, we stroll off with a guide—in fact, our old friend Rose, who assures the "gentlemons" that if we give ourselves to him, he would show us all the wonders of the world for four dollars—to the Hospital of the Brotherhood of the Charity, where there are more Murillos, particularly that truly Spanish picture, *The Thirst*. This building was revived in the seventeenth century, by Don Miguel Vicentolo, a knight of Calatrava, who was converted by a great light from heaven on his way, in a fit of anger, to scold a toll-collector at the gates of Seville who had refused to let some hams of his pass. A few crowns left him by a beggar began the work, which is at once a soup-kitchen, a refuge for the houseless, an almshouse and a hospital. Murillo painted for the church of this hospice, at the instigation of his friend, the charitable Don, no fewer than eleven pictures.—The ceiling is a forest of ornaments. The dome is like a gold cup hung up to serve as a bell. The altar is a pile of twisted pillars and carving. The pulpit is a little gilt goblet, with a flower-stalk base. The two great pictures of Murillo still hang facing each other with quiet critical approval under the cornices and window beneath the dome, and above the side chapel; where priests all day bow and kneel. They are sketchy, low-toned pictures, not very luminous or brilliant, but full of nature and of the thirsty passion of a hot,

drouthy country. The huge brown rock divides the "Sed" picture in two. Moses, in a violet robe, thanks the Almighty for the copious torrent splashing down its music-water among the fifteen bystanders, among whom is Aaron grateful yet amazed. Those sixteen jars and pans show a passionate thirst of which Englishmen have only read—thirst become a lust and desire, which destroys even a mother's affection. There is a mother draining out a jug, and straining back her head to keep the child in her arms from the coveted treasure. There is a less suffering mother giving her youngest and more helpless child to drink, and restraining the elder Esau from the cup he so ravenously desires. Then there is the mounted boy, and there are the children holding up their pitchers entreatingly to be filled. Then come camels and mules, dogs and sheep, all parched and pining for the draught: and, in the distance, winding down among the rocks, more thirsty people and more thirsty animals. The miracle of the Loaves and Fishes is as badly composed as its fellow is admirably put together ("Quite cut in two," grumbles Schwartzlicht, delighted to find something to condemn, because praise is elevating another man, blame lowering another man); but still admirable for its old women, young women, and children.

And while we look at these pictures in the silent church some paupers in their hospital dress are playing dominoes with stolid eagerness on a bench and the sister of charity in the blue robe and white starched cowl who has silently led us into the chapel, is praying on her knees beside the pulpit, the round ebony beads running through her thin fingers, as with rapt eyes she stares vacantly at the curious carved and colored Crucifixion which forms the altarpiece. And now that we have seen the two little panels of Our Saviour and Saint John and the carrion bishop in his cloth of gold which Murillo said to the arrogant painter Valdez Real requires you to hold your nose as you look at it, we snatch one glimpse at the midnight view of the angel helping San Juan de Dios to carry a sick man on his shoulders. The good woman rises slips the key from her belt, receives our fee with a silent bend of the head—as much as to say, He who giveth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord—and lets us out once more into the quiet cloister.

I feel better that night as I sit in my red-tiled bedroom at the hotel, and read at my little iron table slatted with marble, thinking of the gentle generous painter of Seville—the aims-giving, heaven-taught painter of heavenly things, of whom it was recorded as the noblest eulogy upon his tombstone (long since ground to pieces by the ponderous wheels of bullying French cannon)—that he ever lived as if about to die.

[From the Atlantic Monthly.]

A DELAIDE RISTORI.

BY MISS KATE FIELDS.

(Concluded.)

There is no common ground upon which Rachel and Ristori can meet. Their conceptions of Phèdre may be compared, but not their genius. Ristori makes a *tour de force* of what with Rachel was bone of her bone and flesh of her flesh. She is noble in it; her reading is beautiful, as it ever is; and some of her points, particularly in the fourth act, are fine; but we do not feel a character. Ristori's large humanity speaks through it all, and we heartily wish that "Phèdre" had never been translated. Rachel was fifteen years in mastering the idea of this wretched daughter of the monster of Pasiphaë. How useless, then, to look for an equal work of art from a foreigner, with whom the part is a comparatively recent assumption! Independently of predestined genius, Rachel's figure eminently fitted her for the rendering of Greek tragedy. Drapery hung upon her as it hangs upon no other human being, her